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ONE DOLLAR

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Quarters





Four Quarters

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Catbird Seat

THE THREAT OF NOSTALGIA

One wishes that the week of December 7, 1980 were an exception, but it wasn't. Consider its two most newsworthy events. The first members of Ronald Reagan's Cabinet are presented to the press. One look at those hooded-eyed, blue-suited, white-shirted gents and we are all recalling late 1952 and Eisenhower's "millionaires' Cabinet." (And small wonder—according to Elizabeth Drew, Reagan's p.r. people have been "trying to establish for some time now" a comparison between the two Presidents). Later in the week John Lennon is murdered. Suddenly on every television screen appear images as foreign as those 1952-style banality-of-power types: aging flower children standing in front of The Dakota, as always putting their need for self-expression before anyone else's privacy or convenience.

What's at issue here is not an attempt on the part of Ronald Reagan or the members of the counterculture (remember the counterculture?) to assert continuity with history (an activity that seems to have disappeared). It's rather a sort of mindless iconography that debases Eisenhower's political or Lennon's artistic and social significance. It's nostalgia, our new substitute for history. We used to hoot at Grandpa's assertion about the good old days, but it seems we're all dedicated to them now.

And in a particularly dangerous fashion. Nostalgia—a longing for
(continued on page 33)

A Crystal Clear Life

EVE DAVIS

“SMILE! NOW YOU be sweet when you meet the public!” Mrs. Rose shouted across the prairie to her daughter as she walked through the brown grass to the main street of the town and her first job. It was a beautiful June morning.

“Be sweet, now, you hear?” Mrs. Rose shouted again. Emma nodded and shrugged her shoulders, resigned as always to the fact that she had not inherited her mother’s pretty ways. She had tried. She had really tried, especially when her mother assured her that Tom Rose prized sweetness in a woman above all else. At those times, bent on having her own way, rebellious and convinced that she was right, Emma would feel mutiny drain out of her at the invocation of her father’s name, and for a while she was sweet. But it never lasted. By the time she entered the first grade she had given up sweetness, settling instead for a direct manner and undeviating honesty. It was the best she could do. “Tom Rose to a T,” said Mrs. Rose with hollow enthusiasm.

“I’m not sure your father would approve of this job,” she had warned Emma over the breakfast table that morning and went on sorrowing that such a job would lay Emma open to insults from strangers. Or worse. And, furthermore, Mrs. Rose said, she would be sure to hear bad language from the poolhall gang that surged down the street for their afternoon coffee.

“Selma says not,” Emma repeated for the hundredth time. Selma should know. She was not only Mrs. Rose’s best friend but also the cook at Hansen’s Cafe. Would she steer Emma wrong? “She says that Mrs. Hansen told the poolhall men a long time ago that they had to clean up their language or drink their coffee some other place.” But that was the joke of it: there was no other restaurant in this tiny lost prairie town. They had to behave. And as for strangers, insulting or otherwise, few ever came. If they did, they left as soon as possible, bending urgently over their steering wheels, their tires spitting gravel. Emma watched them go and watched without rancor, knowing that they were not leaving much—only a ramshackle settlement sinking greyly into the sagebrush, kept alive by the farmers and railroad men. A good place to go away from,

Emma would think, knowing that when the time came for her to go, the only one she would miss would be Tom Rose. And her mother, of course.

"Well, anyway, smile!" came a faint shout from Mrs. Rose and Emma turned the corner by the post office and entered the cafe.

Dolly, the regular waitress, welcomed her. "Nothing to it," she said heartily. "You'll catch on fast. You're smart, the whole town knows it." And she spent the morning showing Emma how to make coffee in the big urn, warning her to keep the counter clear and to type the menus by eleven at least. Clean, polished, and glittering in the morning sun that poured through the plate glass window, the dining room waited for the lunch crowd. "You won't find a speck of dirt in this hash house," Dolly said, including in the sweep of her hand the boldly patterned linoleum squared off in black and white, the green booths with their crumbless seats. "We're clean as a whistle, boy howdy."

Then she escorted Emma into the kitchen where Selma presided over the huge black coal stove. "So you got here," she said with a grin. When the noon rush began Emma found herself trotting from kitchen to dining room, orders piled high on her arm, waiting on table with surprising ease. She forgot no orders, broke no crockery, and by the time one o'clock came she decided that there wasn't much to this job, after all.

But when the rush thinned out, Dolly turned cranky and all her good will seemed to have evaporated. "My feet are killing me," she said to Emma. "Take over." And she slid into a booth near the kitchen to eat her lunch with Selma. "I wish she'd smile once in a while," Emma heard her say in a loud clear voice. "And, my God, those eyebrows of hers will scare the customers away. Why doesn't she pluck 'em?"

Puzzled, Emma spun around to explore, amidst the plates of cookies and doughnuts and brownies, her reflection in the long mirror in back of the counter. It was, her mother often said, Tom Rose's face, his slash of black eyebrows contrasting oddly with blonde hair, his straight uncompromising mouth. Emma liked her face precisely for that reason: it was her father's. There could be none better. Prettier, she conceded, but not better. "Oh, yes, Tom Rose to a T," her mother would say, snatching a glimpse of her own face in the kitchen mirror. "It's running to fat now," she would sigh, "but in my day—well, can anything beat eyes, kind of round and innocent like mine, followed up with a laugh like mine?" Mrs. Rose produced a laugh, rich, dark and intimate, to demonstrate her point and Emma, devoid of envy, acknowledged that it was a pretty combination. But she still liked her own face best.

"You're just like him, not only in looks," Mrs. Rose said with

resignation. "He was addicted to honesty, just like you. And he had a wonderful brain, as good as yours." Working herself up to enthusiasm, "What girl could ask for more? Now, I ask you?"

No girl could ask for more. Emma decided that Dolly was tired and nodded agreeably when she said that a customer was entitled to a joke or a smile when you handed him the Meat Loaf Special. The best that Emma could deliver was a head-on look and a courteous tilt of the head when she took an order. Emma had no extras. "She doesn't have the gift for it," Dolly murmured.

AFTER EMMA HAD WORKED for a few weeks Dolly asked her how she liked her job.

"It's O.K., but I wouldn't want to spend the rest . . ." Emma broke off, flushing.

"Well, I *do* have to spend the rest of my life waiting on table," Dolly said sharply, and Emma suddenly found herself the subject of a discussion that proceeded as though she weren't even present.

"*Why* do we all think of Emma as something special?" Dolly appealed to Selma. The dining room was empty of customers at this hour of the afternoon; the Hansens were napping in their apartment. It was a good time to clear up a few points that had been nagging at Dolly. "Why," she asked, "do we all take it for granted that she's going to move on to better things when she's through high school? Why isn't *she* going to spend the rest of her life waiting on table? You tell *me*."

Selma shrugged and went on stirring the prune whip. Dolly herself found an answer. "She's never had a set-back, never a hard knock, that's why," Dolly said in a voice of great astonishment. "Never. So, for her anything is possible."

"Something in that," Selma acknowledged, nodding her white chef's hat with the grease drip on top of it.

"Here she is, seventeen, and everything's been clear sailing," Dolly went on. "Why, when I was fourteen . . ." Both her listeners nodded hastily and Emma edged toward the dining room. Everyone had heard, more than once, how a stingy stepfather had kicked Dolly out of the house when she was a mere child. Selma, too, had had some hard knocks, Emma knew. She'd had a rough life, but she didn't talk about it. She was just glad when someone had it easier.

"Look at it this way," she offered. "Emma's one of the lucky ones. There are such people. Nothing bad's ever happened to her. Maybe nothing ever will. She's got a life that has a shine to it. No smudges, just crystal clear, like those glasses behind the counter."

Emma, now in the dining room, looked at the glasses that she had stacked into a precarious shining pyramid reflecting itself in

the mirror. A touch might send it crashing, but Emma had built carefully.

"Good parents," Selma concluded, "are half the battle."

Dolly's face cleared. This was the answer. "That's so," she said. "I forgot."

It did not seem strange to Emma that she was considered by the townspeople to be a girl who had two parents, and fine ones at that. She thought so, herself; she was convinced of it, particularly as far as her father was concerned. "A good man should be remembered," Mrs. Rose often proclaimed. "A girl should know her father, alive or dead." Tom Rose was dead. He had never gotten out of Texas, but when Emma and the townspeople thought of him, he sprang to life, striding down their main street, head and shoulders taller than anyone else, a ten-gallon hat set well back on his blonde head. His deep voice (surely) had been heard in the grocery and hardware stores, and certainly he had shot a little pool at the Buckhorn and paid for a round of drinks. A man's man, Tom Rose was, but with a gentleness and courtesy towards women that most of them had never known but all had yearned for. Mrs. Rose may have arrived alone in town, newly widowed, with her baby daughter on her arm, but she had brought along with her, as surely as she had brought two suitcases, the essence of Tom Rose, shaped by memories, compelled to life by her fluttering little drawl.

She had made him real, more real than the fathers of Emma's classmates slumping along in their worn overalls, barely alive and with absolutely no class at all. For, above all, Mrs. Rose often said in a ringing voice, Tom Rose had class. But Emma, pondering, thought that he had more than his glorious looks, more than class, for filtering through to her like sunlight from a long way off was a directness that could only be called honesty and an unwavering regard for what must be truth. These were his true legacies. No wonder, then, that it seemed to Emma and to everyone else that Tom Rose had merely stepped out of town for seventeen years but would be back at any moment.

ONE NIGHT about three weeks after Emma had begun work at the cafe she came home and casually mentioned to her mother that the Hansens had guests from Blade. Mrs. Rose always stiffened when she heard the name of the county seat. She seldom went to Blade, and when she did, concluded her business as fast as possible and scuttled home again.

"Blade," she now repeated in a noncommittal tone. "Well, who are the guests?"

"Enders. Mr. and Mrs. Morris Enders."

To Emma's astonishment, Mrs. Rose burst into tears. "*This is*

what I was afraid of, letting you work in a public place. Strangers in town, nosing around, asking questions, insulting you." In her agitation she took the pins out of her hair in one swift movement, whipping it up again in a high hard knot on the top of her head. For a moment the long brown hair had covered her shoulders like a shawl, and Emma in the midst of her surprise at her mother's outburst thought what a pretty woman she was.

"They're not insulting," Emma hastened to reassure her. "I doubt they've even looked at the help, much less me."

Mrs. Rose seemed to be comforted and outraged at the same time.

"That's Lily Enders for you," she observed. "Very snobbish. Very high and mighty. Bankers' wives are like that."

"Do you know them, Mama?"

"Years ago. In Texas. I really don't care to discuss the Enders. I've kept out of their way ever since they moved up to this part of the country. They've kept out of mine." She scanned her daughter's face anxiously. "Don't talk to Lily Enders. Don't mention my name. Let me," she continued rather grandly, "remain anonymous."

Emma decided not to talk about the Enders anymore to her mother. But the Hansens and their new friends exchanged visits often that summer, and as far as the Hansens were concerned, nothing was too good for their guests. Emma saw little of them. Meals were served to them, not in the public dining room, but in the privacy of the apartment which was attached to the restaurant. On these occasions Mrs. Hansen used her own crystal and silver and entrusted the serving to Dolly, who used to come out of the apartment laughing. "Hail Mary," she said, "Mrs. Enders is sporting diamonds and they're all rigged out in evening clothes, even old Hansen. Who the ham are they trying to impress? Me?"

It was Selma who reported the diamonds to Mrs. Rose. And diamonds, although she'd never had any, not even a chip in an engagement ring, were Mrs. Rose's passion. Once, when she was visiting Blade, she bought a diamond ring in the ten cent store, but Emma found it a week later in the wastebasket.

"You didn't tell me about the diamonds!" her mother cried when Emma came home that night. "Diamonds! I'll bet she doesn't take them off even when she goes to bed at night."

Emma said she had never seen Mrs. Enders in bed.

"Oh, I knew it, I knew it," Mrs. Rose mourned, not making clear what she knew but going off to bed to throw the covers over her face and remain immobile for a couple of hours. Before she went, she asked, "Is she pretty, still?"

"Sort of," Emma said and did not dare to say what a glittering impression Mrs. Enders really made. Pretty? Yes, when she had

beaten powder into her silky skin, making it silkier still, and worked a faint flush of rouge into her cheekbones and changed the shape of her mouth with lipstick. Under all the make-up, Emma thought, was a very ordinary little face with thin lips and eyes that measured and withheld. But, if you didn't analyze, Mrs. Enders was pretty.

"She always knew how to make the most of what she had," Mrs. Rose said, lingering, but Emma supplied no further details.

One morning Mrs. Hansen swept into the kitchen to rap out the news that the Enders were driving up from Blade in time for dinner. "You'll serve us tonight, Emma. They tell me Dolly's out sick, You absolutely can't depend on help these days. I've said it time and again. Selma, strain the soup for Mr. Enders. He's having trouble digesting solids." And she sailed out.

"Old fart," murmured Selma.

That evening when the supper rush hour was over, Emma, bearing a tureen of soup and a bowl of broth, passed through the large storeroom that Mrs. Hansen called the pantry and paused at the door of the apartment. It was open. After hesitating a moment, Emma entered to find the room empty but with the table set; and yes, the crystal shone, the silver gleamed, just as Dolly had reported. Emma placed the tureen and bowl on the table and left. When she came back a few minutes later, staggering under the tray of covered dishes, her footsteps noiseless in the deep-piled rug, Mrs. Enders was bending over the table. More exactly, she was bending over the broth, gazing intently into it like a priestess reading portents in a pool. And like a priestess, adding magic, she shook into the broth a packet of white powder that lay for a moment on the surface and then dissolved. Mrs. Enders used her forefinger to stir it. It was then, finger dripping, that she looked up to see Emma with the tray, and she, shrinking back from the blazing eyes of the priestess, was certain that with uplifted arm she meant to sweep the tray of food into the rug, into oblivion, and the bearer with it.

The fury lasted only a moment.

Dimples that Emma had never been privileged to see before blossomed in Mrs. Ender's rouged cheeks. They transformed her lips into a smiling arc. Laughter leapt into her eyes. "His medicine," she said with concern and devotion, making a little circular motion with her arms as though she would have embraced Emma. Then with deliberation, her eyes still on Emma's face, she brought her wet finger up to her mouth. Her tongue flickered out of caress the drops of broth still clinging to it. "Delicious," she said and the word was a command to believe.

Breathless, Emma retreated, still holding the tray. "No, no," she whispered while Mrs. Enders smilingly, without effort, held her eyes, bending her, commanding her. "No," Emma whispered

again, and it was only when, still retreating, she felt the edge of the buffet brush her arm that she was able to wrench her eyes away from those of the priestess, place the tray on the buffet and face her without fear. It was what Tom Rose would have done.

The room darkened. Sofa, table and chairs fell into shadow and the two women stood, immobile, staring into each other. It seemed to Emma that a current connected them, plus to minus. Sparking and sputtering, electricity danced between them until, summoning the courage bequeathed by Tom Rose, achieving by a super-human effort the protecting spirit of Tom Rose, Emma broke the circuit by lifting an iron-heavy hand.

She spoke. She wanted to shout the word, to scream it, to warn the entire town, but she could only whisper. Yet it was loud enough. She watched the loathsome word creep along an invisible thread to be received with . . . yes, with relief. Amazed, Emma watched Mrs. Enders' shoulders slacken. Her eyes closed as she took unto herself the word. "Murder," Emma whispered again and ran out of the room.

Her flight stopped short in the pantry where she sagged against the chopping block and fought to breathe as the sweat poured down her face. When she began to shiver, she tore an old uniform of Selma's from a hook on the wall and wrapped it around her. Minutes or an hour passed. Then, gradually, she began to hear. From the kitchen a slam of dishes, the swish of a mop; from the apartment, the murmur of voices.

Lovely, ordinary sounds. And had it not been, really, an ordinary day with ordinary happenings? Nothing had happened. A woman had stirred some medicine into her husband's broth. That was all. That was all. She, Emma, was at fault. Some mechanism in her brain had gone awry and she had judged everything through darkness and madness. That was all.

And yet—she remembered the electric climate of the room, and evil, a palpable presence, swirling out through the shadows, drawing a circle around her and Mrs. Enders. But she had broken the circle! She had outfaced the priestess! She had given a name to the evil before she ran.

No. She had not made a mistake.

"Are the bigwigs still piling into their eats?" Selma asked, poking her head around the kitchen door. "Dessert," she said, thrusting a large coconut cake at Emma. "Coffee coming up."

The diners looked up at Emma's entrance. Even Mr. Enders, his seal-like head brooding over his broth, glanced up fleetingly. The conversation stopped completely and Emma, flushing, knew with a certainty that they had been talking about her. Mrs. Hansen smiled too fast. Mr. Hansen cleared his throat as he always did

when he was embarrassed. But Mrs. Enders after a slight pause ignored the interruption and went on talking.

“. . . and so for a couple of months that summer he strutted up and down the streets of our town in that ridiculous hat, much too large for him, supported, I guess, by those thick black eyebrows . . .”

Emma's hands froze around the platter she was removing. Mrs. Hansen made a sudden movement, bumping the leg of the table. The goblets rocked.

“Who knows where he came from or where he went? Who really cared? He was a drifter, leaving pregnant girls behind him, I am sure, in every little town in the Southwest. Well, in Harrisburg it was my friend, Mattie Rose. She was the kind of a girl that sort of thing would happen to. One drink—she should have had a body-guard, and I mean that literally. Someone to guard her body . . .”

“Coffee?” Emma's voice was as clear and cold as the ringing of a crystal glass. The table was cleared. The dessert plates stood in front of Mrs. Hansen. “Coffee?” Emma asked again. Mrs. Hansen murmured something that could have been ‘yes’ or ‘no’ or neither.

“He was a liar from the word go,” said Mrs. Enders, smiling straight at Emma. “Lying, I say, is hereditary. Like father, like son. Or in this case, like father, like daughter.”

In the silence that followed Emma moved noiselessly to the buffet, removed the coconut cake from its stand, and stood behind Mrs. Enders. Then, while everyone but Mrs. Enders watched in horror, Emma pressed the cake firmly down on the marcelled hair. For one moment it looked like a white fur cap, and before Mrs. Enders started to scream, she had the look of an ice carnival queen, purely crowned and beautiful in frost and ice.

LIGHT STILL HUNG in the evening sky when Emma made her escape, crashing out of the back door of the cafe, Mrs. Enders' shrieks ringing in her ears. “Leave me alone,” she shouted at Selma, who tried to stop her. She started to walk. Down the length of the alley and back again. Then down again. There was no place to go. No place to fold in upon herself, to suspend all thought, all feeling. There was no place. Except—she stopped her aimless walking—except the stairwell that led into the cafe's storeroom. The door would be locked for the night, but the steps were empty. Emma claimed them with a gasp, sinking down on the cement floor, wrapping her arms around her knees, hugging them to her breast.

Mrs. Enders, cake-crowned! Laughter stirred within her throat like an itching. She would have given all the money she had earned this summer to be able to release her laughter, gathering like a tidal wave within her, and let it ring out over the town, peal and peal. But she stuffed the skirt of her uniform into her mouth,

muffling all the sound while she remembered Mrs. Enders, the Snow Queen. And how the coconut drifted on her shoulders like sweet curls of frost. Laughter possessed Emma's body. She rocked with it, ached with it, gasped with it, unable after a while to get her breath, for the laughter had hardened into a mass within her chest and it must be dissolved or she would die.

To crown with cake the destroyer, to annihilate her with laughter—that should have been the end of it. Why, then, did the mass refuse to dissolve, spreading, instead, and growing and taking unto itself a name? Tom Rose, she whispered sorrowfully. *You, Tom Rose.*

A made-up man, a made-up name. A drifter, a wearer of cowboy hats. Fog, shadow, a nothing at all. She had never doubted him. If she doubted anyone, she doubted her mother, who on occasion had a jolly disregard for truth and a flair for play-acting. But she had never doubted Tom Rose. Not even on that day when she was ten, coming home from a friend's house where they had spent hours leafing through movie magazines. Emma marched into her mother's bedroom, pointed to a framed picture on the dresser and said, "That's a picture of Tom Mix. Is Tom Mix my father?"

"Of course not. Certainly not." Flustered, pink of face, Mrs. Rose swept the picture off the dresser. "Of course, it's Tom Mix. I never said otherwise. But I never had a decent picture of your father, and he was a dead ringer for Tom Mix. Look at those eyes, straight and true. Look at that jaw. Your father's to a T. And now yours."

Looking like your father was one thing, but looking like Tom Mix was another. Emma did not object when the photograph went into the wastebasket.

Nor did she doubt that time when she had to have a tooth pulled. She and her mother rode the mail truck down to Blade so she could visit the dentist. Blade was much larger than Glenrock, and both Emma and her mother agreed that it was an unusual feeling to walk down the street and not know a soul. Mrs. Rose grew giddy at the very thought of such freedom.

"We'll splurge this once," she said, pushing Emma ahead of her into the coffee shop of the Blade Hotel. "Your father liked a beer now and then," said Mrs. Rose, ordering not one, not two, but three beers in rapid succession. Suddenly gay and skittish, she glanced boldly around the dining room. "Now, this is grand," she said. It was almost as though an electric switch had been turned on inside of her, for her eyes, so modestly lowered in Glenrock, sparkled; her cheeks flushed pink, and her breast seemed to burst out of their corsets and jut aggressively over the table. "Mrs. Rose," the townspeople of Glenrock, astonished, would have said had they seen her

then, "is a looker."

"Life is just a bowl of cherries," she said conversationally and took two quick bites out of her cheese sandwich. Emma was amazed at the transformation in her mother and even more amazed when she froze dramatically and whispered, "Don't turn your head. Don't move an inch, but there . . . there, over at that corner table is your father!"

Emma whirled around in her chair and fastened her eyes on a man stolidly eating corned beef and cabbage. He did not look like Tom Mix. Not in the least. His jawline had disappeared into a roll of flesh, and as for his eyes, they were examining his corned beef with complete absorption. With thudding heart, Emma turned back to her mother and never did find out whether the eyes were true or not.

"But you said he was dead!"

"Oh, I did. He is. But for a moment, there, for a moment . . ." Mrs. Rose pushed her sandwich away from her with a petulant hand. "Well, anyway, let's go."

Any fool would have known.

But fools can say good-bye, and here in the stairwell, it was time to say goodbye to Tom Rose, whatever he was, wherever he was.

Well, then, goodbye.

You're sure?

I'm sure.

No hard feelings?

None. And, (she hesitated) thanks. Yes, (more strongly) thanks. Don't mention it. So I'll mosey along.

And he did, drifting out into the oceans of sky and land. Emma watched him go, and then she cried.

Sunbread

VIRGINIA M. STETSER

Imagine dough kneaded by earth-worn hands
Then put in the sun to rise.
Imagine a sun hot enough to bake bread.
Imagine the flies.

Imagine both seeing and eating.
Imagine the sense of humor,
Not to mention intestinal fortitude
Of the consumer.

Marxism With a Latin Beat: A Trip to Cuba

JOSEPH P. MOONEY

ARRIVING IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY is usually a disorienting experience. It is even more so when the country is Cuba, because curiosity about the country is compounded by anxiety over how one will be treated by officials of a government which is openly anti-American. I felt some tension on arriving at Havana's airport until I spotted a familiar face, the author and columnist Jimmy Breslin, who was waiting for a flight back to New York. We talked briefly, but three attempts at taking his picture failed because the flash attachment on my camera wouldn't work. This was an omen of my eight-day tour of Cuba.

Like Breslin, I was visiting Cuba to learn something about life in the only Marxist society in the hemisphere. The U.S. government has permitted tourists to go to Cuba since 1977, and more than 100,000 have done so. The majority are exiles visiting relatives, their suitcases loaded with gifts of clothing and other goods scarce in Cuba—which is to say just about everything except rum. This influx of Cuban-Americans was the impetus for the recent exodus of about 100,000 Cubans to the U.S. When tourists arrived, Cubans saw tangible evidence of the prosperity of their ex-compatriots, and many want the chance to achieve a similar standard of living. This is the main reason refugees came to the U.S., but it is also clear that most who have come were unhappy with conditions in Cuba. The Castro regime has had some success, particularly in education and health, but the Cuban economy is in serious trouble. Although some of the causes may be beyond the control of the government, for example crop diseases which have damaged both the sugar and tobacco crops, the Marxist government is itself much of the problem.

All governments make mistakes; Marxist governments just make more, in part because they are deeply involved in so many aspects of their societies. In Cuba, I think, Marxism has a special problem: trying to find the right blend between socialism and Latin American traditions.

The most intriguing aspect of the tour was seeing how Marxism mixes with the Latin style. Latin countries are notorious for their inefficiency and lack of discipline, characteristics which are part of the Spanish heritage of most of Latin America. In an account of his experiences during the Spanish Civil War, George Orwell wrote of how every foreigner serving with him loved the Spanish but was "appalled by their inefficiency, above all their maddening unpunctuality." Orwell could have been describing foreign reaction to Latin Americans.

Unpunctuality is certainly not the only frustrating aspect of Latin culture. By our standards, Latin countries are inefficient and poorly organized. Their governments are incredibly bureaucratic and most of them are openly corrupt. The trappings of modernity exist in their cities, but in too many instances the unpredictability with which they work defies reasonable explanation. Murphy's Law, that if anything can go wrong, it will, has a peculiar corollary in Latin America: when it does go wrong it won't be fixed. (This seems to be especially true of toilets. In his novel *Our Man in Havana*, Graham Greene refers to an "evil toilet," a perfect description of most of those I've seen. They really do look "evil"—it is not just that they aren't kept clean and in reasonable working condition.)

The irritating characteristics of Latin countries and their people are more than offset by their warmth, gaiety, and charm. Somehow the positive and negative blend into a whole which is peculiarly Latin and generally appealing. Still one can't help wondering if their people would not be better off if their countries were better organized and disciplined, if they at least had governments which could more effectively govern.

This is what makes Cuba of special interest to students of Latin America, especially the more radical scholars who view Cuba as the prototype for Latin American societies of the future. The Marxist government has been organized so as to promote discipline and efficiency, and there is evidence that it has been partly successful. Before going to Cuba, I thought that the Castro regime might have come close to achieving its goal of developing a "new man"—a selfless Cuban who is productive and much less interested in material things than his pre-Castro counterpart. I thought I would find a country fundamentally different from other Latin countries: organized, efficient, and even a little dull.

In some respects, my expectations were realized. Cuba is more efficient and better organized than most Latin American countries. It is also sort of dull. Nonetheless, it remains very much a Latin country. Marxism has brought about important changes, some good and some bad, but much of what I saw and experienced was

not much different from what I've known in other Latin countries.

This was a pleasant discovery, but it does lead to one difficulty: when something goes wrong in Cuba, it is impossible to know whether it's Latin or Marxist inefficiency, or some combination of the two. In some respects Cuba suffers from the worst of both worlds; Marxist rigidity and incompetence are superimposed on Latin disorganization. However, it is the Latin style that dominates.

This is almost immediately evident when one arrives in Havana. Except for the lack of commercial advertising and murderous traffic, Havana is very much a Latin capital. The streets are filled with people, most of them neatly dressed in colorful casual clothing, something of a surprise because there is a serious clothing shortage. Cubans appear to have adjusted to the shortage, putting together at least one presentable outfit. Many of them have acquired clothing through the black market or from relatives in the U.S. In any case, they seemed about as well dressed as other Latin Americans. They also seemed at least as vibrant, in spite of the long lines which any kind of diversion attracted. Cubans don't earn much money, but they can't spend much on necessities since these are rationed (food and clothing), or provided at low (housing) or no cost (education and medical care). As a result, most Cubans have surplus purchasing power, which they can spend on entertainment. There are relatively few restaurants, movie theaters, and night clubs, so long lines are inevitable. The search for a good time in Havana is a lot of work.

The Cubans I met were surprisingly friendly and very interested in the U.S. I cannot recall a single instance of anti-American sentiments being expressed by individual Cubans, in spite of constant government propaganda against the U.S. My guess is that the propaganda is so pervasive that most Cubans have stopped hearing or seeing it; it's just part of the landscape. Also many Cubans think that the U.S. can't be as bad as it is portrayed; they have friends and relatives who have prospered in this country, and some things which many Cubans value highly are products of U.S. culture—baseball, blue jeans, rock music.

The warmth of the Cuban people is typical of Latin America. So is the inefficiency of just about every organization in Cuba. A good example is Cubatour, the government agency which controls the travel business and is responsible for itineraries, fees, etc. The agency mismanaged almost every aspect of our tour, one especially arranged mainly for faculty from colleges and universities in the Philadelphia area. We spent a beautiful Sunday afternoon, the only really good weather we had in eight days, touring Havana's main cemetery! If one has seen one Latin American cemetery, there is no point in seeing another; the motif, wretched excess, is always the

same. True, our guide said that is is the most beautiful cemetery in the world (how could she know this? even if true, who cares?), but then everything in Cuba is the “best,” “largest,” “most beautiful,” or some other superlative.

Cubatour also scheduled us for visits to several museums, including the former home of Hemingway, on a Monday. Now it happens that all museums in Havana are closed on Mondays, something which Cubatour officials ought to know. To their credit, I should add that the free time scheduled for Monday afternoon was, in fact, realized—Cuban officials are good at arranging for free time.

The condition of Havana is symptomatic of a poorly organized society. In this case, I think it is Marxism rather than the Latin style which is the cause. The transportation system is easily the worst of any Latin city I’ve visited. The only redeeming quality is that traffic is light because there are few private cars. Buses are always jammed, and long lines of people wait at each stop on the chance that one person may get off so that at least two can try to get on. Taxis are impossible to obtain, except when one wants to leave from a hotel; then it is only necessary to get into a line. Getting back to the hotel is another story. A Cuban economist was kind enough to ride with me to a government office. We were not sure how long we would be, so we did not ask the cab to wait—a serious mistake. We spent an hour and a half waving at empty cabs, which would not pick us up because they could not know whether our destination was part of the officially established route. Of course, they could not know our destination was *not* on their route as they did not stop to find out. This is decidedly untypical of other Latin cities, where cab drivers spend much of their time trying to drag any fairly prosperous-looking pedestrians into their taxis. Cuban socialism has made this kind of individual initiative irrelevant by providing a comfortable guaranteed income to cab drivers, who can therefore afford to ignore potential customers.

The poor transportation system is only one aspect of the general neglect which affects Havana and much of the rest of Cuba. The city suffers from a serious lack of maintenance, much of which could be taken care of with very little labor and material. The hotel we stayed in, once considered the best in Havana, is a good example. There wasn’t a seat on any of the toilets. (I think I read that the seats in some hotels were stolen in 1959 when Castro opened the hotels to peasants who came to Havana to celebrate his victory over Batista. The seats probably would come in handy in a countryside which still lacks modern sanitary facilities. In a sense, tourists are making a small sacrifice for the revolution.) The water in the hotel was undrinkable because it was contaminated by sea water. Yet nearby

hotels did not have the problem, and no one could explain why. The cord on the only lamp in my room was too short to reach the outlet so it was attached to another wire which was plugged into the outlet; and both wires were exposed. A few inches of tape and a little time could have reduced the risk of fire or electrocution. Even better, the lamp could have been rewired.

The deficiencies of the hotel and the depressing appearance of Havana are not necessarily evidence that the Cuban system is flawed. Most of us had had similar problems in other Latin countries, so we accepted them without complaint. But there are other aspects of life in Havana which are unique in comparison with other Latin countries. There is a severe housing shortage, so severe that many newly married couples have no choice but to continue living with each other's parents in overcrowded quarters. The only way these couples can have conjugal relations is by renting a room for an hour or two in motels built especially for this purpose. Something is clearly wrong with the system of allocating resources to housing and for the use of existing houses. Former homes of Cuban refugees, many of which are very large and could be converted to apartments, are being used as day-care centers and schools. Education is given priority over the provision of living space for young families. The state preempts the parents' role in educating their children. It seems to me poor policy in a country where the family has always been an important institution to systematically weaken it. The success of this policy may help explain why some of the recent Cuban refugees are men who have reportedly abandoned their wives and children. It also helps to explain why many who resent the government's interference with their family life and who want to preserve their strong family traditions have left.

But the Castro regime is inconsistent in its policy toward family life. While it is following Marxist ideology in deemphasizing the family, it also, in the spirit of Latin tradition, has enacted a Family Code in order to strengthen it. This law spells out, in great detail, the duties and responsibilities of all family members. Ironically, one purpose of the law is to break down another Latin tradition, *machismo*, the cult of masculinity. Heavy drinking, promiscuity, carrying weapons, and treating women solely as sex objects are some of the more obvious manifestations of the tradition. Cuba has made some progress in reducing sexual discrimination, but young men in Havana act like their counterparts in other Latin countries; an attractive woman still provokes whistling, hissing, chirping, and occasional obscene comments.

The Family Code attempts to enforce equality between husbands and wives. It is a well-intentioned attempt to influence human behavior through detailed legislation. I suspect it could have

only been enacted in a socialist country that is also Latin. Latin American governments love to pass laws, most of which are cheerfully ignored. Cuba may have reached a new level of socialist *and* Latin nit-picking with this code.

The problems of the family are most evident in Havana because of the housing shortage. Another obvious problem in the city is that there seems to be more than the usual share of young men with no apparent employment. This is not unusual in a Latin city, but it does seem strange in a society which purports to place emphasis on "human values" instead of profits. Some jobs have been created to absorb the unemployed; for example, a policeman is assigned to almost every block not to stem any crime wave but to provide jobs. (This was the explanation given by a U.S. State Department spokesman attached to the U.S. Interests Section in Havana. He added that he and others noticed that the policemen spent much of their time using public telephones. He questioned a Cuban friend about this and learned that the police were not reporting crimes or results of discreet surveillance; they were taking by phone to each other because they were lonely and bored.)

Many young men are involved in one of the most blatant black markets in the world, further evidence of some serious flaws in the Cuban system. They wait around hotels trying to engage tourists in conversation—not too difficult to do since tourists get the impression that the men are simply being friendly. After a few minutes, the conversation turns to the real point; the tourist is asked for a favor, a request to buy something, usually clothing, in the special tourist stores. These stores charge low prices and Cubans are not permitted to patronize them. A pair of blue jeans sells for about \$17 in the stores and can be resold for \$50 or more, one of the most capitalistic offers I've ever received. Of course, black market transactions are illegal, but the government tolerates them, probably as a means of absorbing surplus purchasing power. The government seems simply not aware that a flourishing black market often leads to widespread corruption; and that the tolerance of the black market conflicts with the socialist goal of developing selfless human beings.

IT MAY NOT BE FAIR to judge the Cuban system by Havana, for the government has let the city decline in order to concentrate its resources on the countryside. The Revolution is, in Cuban ideology, a continuous process which is designed mainly to improve the lot of the rural population. Thus, the true test is in the countryside, and it was this part of the trip about which we had great expectations. On the way to a rural area, we stopped at a housing project being constructed not too far from Havana. The project was impres-

sive, particularly because the workers were not skilled construction workers but were volunteers from other industries, who had been given leaves of absence from their regular employment. For working on the project, the workers are given first claim on the housing units. The idea is that what they lack in experience and skill will be more than offset by the incentive of working on their future homes. The project is part of a new town, much of which is already occupied. One sad note was the town's supermarket, which had virtually no merchandise for sale. The almost empty shelves were eloquent testimony of trouble in paradise.

Throughout the rural areas there were signs of progress in housing, medical care, and especially education. This is the single most impressive achievement of the Castro regime. As in the cities, day care centers, nursery schools, primary and secondary schools are everywhere. Many new schools have been built, most of them large enough to provide classrooms and dormitories for several thousand students. A school which we visited was particularly impressive. The curriculum was ambitious: mathematics, physical sciences, foreign languages were emphasized. In addition, all students are required to work three hours a day on a nearby vegetable farm. But there were some curious anomalies. The school is a middle school, or roughly a junior high school, so the students' ages ranged from about 12 to 16. Yet the floor of the girls' dormitory was covered with dolls, the type one normally associates with 4 or 5 year-olds, which appeared, for whatever reason, to have been set up in anticipation of our visit. The contrast between the dolls, which are hardly likely to promote emotional development, and the girls' wash hanging nearby with its complement of bras, was surprising. The contradiction with the school's attempts to help the students become more mature and responsible by combining a program of studies with farmwork made it look as though the school administrators are unconsciously retaining the Latin tradition of over-protecting young girls. They seem to want the girls to remain demure and innocent but also to be productive socialists.

Another unusual aspect of the school was its almost military discipline. While we were there a large number of students assembled in a courtyard, lined up in columns of two, and marched off, presumably to class. There was no sign of the behavior that one would expect from a large group of teenagers, just complete silence. Groups of Latin American teenagers, especially those which include both sexes, are usually exuberant and unrestrained. Only a very strict and un-Latin disciplinary system could make them behave as they did.

One of the most disturbing things about the school was the propaganda display in the entrance hall. Pictures of Marx, Lenin,

and Engels were prominently displayed as were posters glorifying the Soviet Union. There were some posters about the Revolution, but there was a notable absence of Cuban heroes, something which is common throughout the island. To be sure, there are pictures of Castro, Che Guevara, and a few other leaders of the Revolution. However, other great figures from Cuba's past are usually ignored, presumably because they are linked with Cuba's capitalist past. The Castro regime appears to want Cuban children to identify with socialist theoreticians rather than with pre-revolutionary Cuban patriots, even though the latter were usually men who fought only for Cuban independence and were not defenders of the present economic system.

We could not leave the countryside without several other examples of Cubatour's inefficiency. We were scheduled to visit a cigar factory and a sugar mill, but the visits never came off. We were told that they were closed for vacation, but as this was the time of the sugar harvest, the mill had to be open. I suspect that the real reasons were the diseases which affected both crops. In any case, we spent a good portion of one day imprisoned in the tour bus as we shuttled back and forth through the city of Santa Clara. On our fourth trip through the city, our guide pointed out, for the fourth time, an armored train which had played an important role in the battle for the city during the Revolution. About four hundred men of Bastista's army were sent in the train to defend the city. The train was captured by rebels, led by Che Guevara. On the fourth pass, I wondered aloud about how the hell they got those guys to come out of the train; after all it was armored. The consensus was that the troops were threatened with a continuous tour back and forth through Santa Clara.

Our return from Santa Clara to Havana was supposed to be a fast trip by way of the main highway which links the cities. Our guide suggested another route which would take us along the coast, through the "beautiful" city of Matanzas. It would take a few hours longer but we were assured it would be worth the time. We passed through beautiful Matanzas shortly after dark.

The glaring deficiencies of Cubatour aside, the most frustrating experience of the tour was the refusal of Cuban officials to discuss any issue which they considered controversial. In every meeting, we raised questions about political, economic, and social problems which the country faces. The response was always the same: Cuba does not have problems except for those arising from the U.S. trade embargo and from the activities of a handful of "counter-revolutionaries." In no case could our questions have been considered provocative; we were simply trying to become better informed about the Cuban approach to coping with the kinds of

problems every nation has. It was particularly disappointing that even university officials and faculty refused to acknowledge that the socialist regime has made mistakes, even those which Castro has admitted in public speeches. Some of us were able to meet privately with individual Cubans who did express some disagreement with the Castro government, particularly Cuba's military involvement in Angola and Ethiopia. Nevertheless there was an atmosphere of repression in these conversations.

THERE ARE CONFLICTS in Cuba. Its goals are socialistic while much of its population, notably in Havana, is still motivated by capitalistic values, a legacy of Cuba's capitalist past. The best evidence of this is the black market. Nonetheless, most Cubans enjoy a better standard of living than they did before Castro. More Cubans than ever before have access to good schools, medical care, and in spite of the housing shortage, to adequate shelter. In these respects the accomplishments of Cuban socialism over the past twenty years probably surpass those of any other Latin country. And the Cuban people, in spite of the refugees, strongly support the Castro government. Thus, it is wrong to conclude, as some have, that Cuban socialism has failed. On the other hand, Cuba is not the workers' paradise that some would have us believe. A case could be made that Cuba would have progressed even more as a free society. Before Castro, Cuba had one of the highest standards of living in Latin America. The revolution was not economic; it was a revolution against a brutally repressive dictator. To have been successful, the revolution need not have been Marxist. A progressive democratic system probably could have achieved as much, if not more, as the Castro regime, without the loss of freedom.

Cuba is a country where the government is omnipresent and one wonders if the Cuban people will not become emotionally drained by the constant intrusion of government in their lives. As long as economic conditions improve, most Cubans are likely to be satisfied. At some point, however, even economic progress is not enough to satisfy most people's desire to be free. A Cuban friend, now living in the U.S., once commented on the difference between living under a dictatorship of the right and the left. As he put it, a rightist dictatorship will leave people alone to do what they wish so long as they are not political; as long as they do not become involved in political opposition. On the other hand, a dictatorship of the left is truly totalitarian; the government controls or significantly influences almost every aspect of people's lives. This is the way it is in Cuba. One can admire what has been done to improve the welfare of the poor without accepting the idea that it could only have been done through socialism.

Our last night in Cuba was spent at the Tropicana night club. The drinks were fairly good and the entertainment revealing: a combination of socialist propaganda, Latin music, and Las Vegas chorus lines, vintage 1940. It typified Cuba today; a blend of socialist, Latin, and American traditions and values. The fellow next to me decided to smoke an expensive (and overrated) Havana cigar. As he struck the Cuban-made match, it exploded, showering me with hot debris which burned a sizable hole in my best slacks. As veteran Latin Americanists, we were not surprised. All Latin American countries produce poor quality matches, half of which are likely to set the user on fire. In this respect, as in so many others, Cuba is still a Latin country.

Rabbit

M. J. FOLEY

First
In her cleft
Between firm rocks
Wide eyes wild
Upon her hill
She danced for me
Till
A lean scream
She felt my bolt
Search her cleft
Warm her heart
The middle of her heart
Spill her soft secrets
Then
She lay peaked
Upon the hill
Tired eyes wide
Suppliant ears.

Driving

MARYLEE MacDONALD

“ACH, PAUL, why do we need a new car?” his wife said. She was thin and aristocratic, but her voice rose easily to a high plaintive pitch that sounded almost childish. Married fifteen years, he had never gotten used to that tone, but would have been embarrassed to admit there was anything about her he found intolerable. He ignored the question, sharpened his pencil loudly, and pretended to concentrate on the sheets of statistics before him.

Inge was sewing. This was the first chance she had had to sit down all day, but she found it hard to relax. As she pushed her needle through the sock, she felt it slide against the darning egg: her lips pursed and she readied another question.

“What kind of car is it?”

“A Citroen, a French car. It rides on a cushion of air and has foam seats.” Owning a Citroen intrigued him. It was only one of the extra benefits he got for working for the Americans. His parents had advised him against it, but this car would prove to them he had made the right decision.

“Do the French know how to make cars, Paul? Couldn’t they give you a Mercedes instead?”

Her hands dropped to her lap. As he looked at her, he saw her eyes, round and naive as they had been at sixteen. It was a wonder she managed with the children. She had no business sense and knew nothing of the outside world. He blamed himself for that, but could see no way for her to become less isolated.

“They’re giving me a very fine car. I can’t ask them for another one. That’s not the way they do things.” Besides, he was proud of having a car that was unusual in Neuhof, their new home. It would count for something with the neighbors.

“The Amis! Did they give you the car so that you could drive more? Did you tell them your wife complained about not having the car? Now they give you one so she won’t complain?” She was mortified that he might have told them.

“Inge, I didn’t tell them. I’m a very unimportant man in the office. That’s why I have to travel instead of sitting behind a desk all day. The car is just part of company policy.”

"But I worry so when you're away. Why can't you get a job where you're home more like you used to be? Remember our beautiful house in the country—with the office downstairs and you working at home?"

Of course he remembered it, but he had been self-employed then. The house had been sold to avoid bankruptcy. Even then it was close. If it were not for the Americans, he didn't know if he could make it now. No German firm paid nearly as much as they did. And with four children, living was expensive.

He went back to the figures on his desk. He felt as if he spent half his life with numbers, and always numbers that never added up, never balanced, but that he had in the back of his mind: at work, a contract, a sale of a tractor, his commission; and then the old debt, the interest payments; and at home, the expenses month to month, trying not to fall further behind.

INGE'S ONE FRIEND Birgitta was also a newcomer to the town. Inge thought her typically Bavarian: a dark hair and eyes, lazy, and spontaneous. And though she normally despised Bavarians, she made an exception of Birgitta, perhaps because she knew the woman would not gossip. With Paul away so much, she began to feel a great need for a friend, and it was a relief to have someone to share secrets with, a good friend such as she had not had since childhood.

"If my mother would just take the children for a while," she said, "it would be such a help." It was summer vacation. She had spent all day ironing so that her arm felt heavy lifting the teapot.

"Have you asked her?"

"Oh, she'd take them for an afternoon, but what good is that? I'd have to drive them down, then be stuck there listening to her complaints."

"Is it far from here?" Birgitta asked, slicing herself a second helping of strawberry torte.

"An hour's drive there and an hour back. In the countryside, where we used to have our house."

"Is she really so sour, then?"

"Worse. She always has a complaint. She drove my poor father away. His one entertainment was playing in the village band, but she gave him such a bad time that eventually he stayed at the tavern every night. It was hardly a marriage."

She brushed a fly off her face. She felt sticky and hot, and agitated from worrying about her own marriage: whether it would be a close one, with a mutuality of love that would last until old age.

That was why she watched what she ate, why she cared about her clothes and figure, and why she wanted the house to be neat and smoothly run. A home she wanted. A place for love, for making her husband and friends comfortable, a base for her to spread out from, or a sphere where she could give in the ways that were familiar to her, to those she loved. She was happy being a woman. She had never questioned why she was not something else—not a man, for instance. She found it almost impossible to imagine what it must be like to be a man, to have a job, and to be so interested in it that it took up most of your time. But it was one of the differences that seemed appropriate to men. To her, personal relationships with a few people were important, and she could grant a man's priorities if it left some room for her own.

"Ja, thank God for you, Birgitta. You are a true friend now that Paul is away so much. With Mutti and my beautiful countryside so far, and my poor Papa gone, I feel like you are all I have left, you and the children."

The following week they had their tea indoors. Because it was raining, the children were restless and noisy. The older boys, who had come bounding downstairs, were sliding back and forth across the hall in their socks. They skated over to the table and sat down. Baby Franck was shining and grabbing at his mother's skirts, and laundry was piled and folded on chairs. Birgitta was the only woman in the town whom Inge would have invited in with the house such a mess.

"Well, how did it go over the weekend?"

"Here, Franck, have a Kek and leave your mother alone. Go play with Rolf and Peter. That's it." She put a cookie in his pudgy little fist and he waddled over to watch television. The older boys were blowing a typhoon across the top of their hot chocolate.

"Stop it, boys," Inge scowled. They should know better, especially with company. Lately they seemed to pay no attention to her at all. They were of the age where they needed their father around. The boys stopped their blowing but simpered and grinned at each other instead. Were they daring her to get mad, or just showing off? Her children had never been well-behaved and now it seemed they were getting worse and worse.

"Paul didn't get home until Saturday morning. He hardly spoke to me all weekend. I was furious at him."

"I think you need to get out of the house for a while. Let's go for a walk."

"In the rain?"

"Ja. why not?" Birgitta pushed back her tea-cup from the edge of the table so Franck wouldn't pull it over.

Inge knew it was exactly what she needed. Lately she'd been so tangled up in herself. The weekend had left her tense and distracted. Her head was aching: she wondered if she was driving Paul away with her complaining and was afraid that she had already driven him away. After shopping on Saturday morning, he had put away the groceries, stacking them in cupboards by sizes; but his concentration on the cans, the packages—on all the *things* in the house—confirmed her fears that *she* was no longer important to him. And then he had shown so little patience with the children. Clean up. Sit down. There was none of the old joy: no playing soccer in the street or running with them dangling from his back. He said only that he was tired, and he slept on the couch when she complained of him confining himself to their bedroom.

Inge pulled the door shut behind her and pushed up the umbrella. Birgitta slipped her arm under her elbow. The rain pelted the umbrella and water from the street splattered her shoes. She took a deep breath and tried to relax. Birgitta squeezed her arm. They walked downhill to the street that led into the business district. They nodded to the butcher in the *Metzgerei*, and he waved his knife back and forth at them as if it were a train wig-wag. Cars were splashing quietly past them and Inge could feel cold water spray her stockings. The road became narrower and turned to cobblestone as they neared the river.

The older part of town spread out from an old castle, just by the water's edge. The homes along these streets were her favorites: old houses with dates on them and sayings above the door; old houses with cross-wood inlays. She could see how the ground level had risen over the years. Some of the doors looked as though they had been made for children the sidewalks had risen so. Other doors that had not been permanently closed had a step down into them. It gave her a comfortable feeling to know that the same family had been living in the house for generations, and she thought of the sidewalks and civilization that had grown up around them as a kind of sea that had sealed them in.

They came to the castle but all they could see was its high ivy-covered wall. As they turned the corner, they saw the Rhine. Bundles of grey clouds poured rain down into its rushing waters. Across the river, the vineyards on the hills were already orange and yellow, and seemed to hide behind a cloud of mist rising from the river. The growers would harvest soon. Old wine would be emptied from the barrels to make ready for new. Each of the vineyards opened its tasting rooms at this time of year and couples would go round in the evenings with their friends for a gay time. She knew no one in Neu-hof beside Birgitta, and anyway Paul was never home. She thought of herself as a Rhinelander, and she felt an affinity with the

hills and vineyards (better wine than beer like the lazy Bavarians), but as she watched the rain come down, making the boats on the river sway from side to side, and forming whitecaps around the moorings, she longed to go inland once again, to be away from the dirty Rhine, inland to the hills that were wet and green. The countryside, her village Altbraunheim, could absorb the rain without the turbulence, like the pillow that muffled her crying in the night. The village, somehow, was more important than she had realized. It was not a place she could leave behind.

“**P**AUL, DO YOU KNOW what I found yesterday when I was cleaning out the cupboard?” She waited for him to look up from the potato pancakes he was frying. He stirred a bit in the pan with his spatula and then turned his head to the side.

“I found the letters you wrote to me when I was at the Kur.”

She waited for him to react. It was a time they had once enjoyed together, working in the kitchen. He was the only man she knew who enjoyed cooking, and she had never completely understood why.

It could have been for gaiety or sharing that she brought up the letters. He was not sure. But finding the letters had brought back all the loveliness of his infatuation with her, and the way that had sifted down in the last year with so little seen of each other, so that now the letters were a rebuke to him. Even they have become a weapon, he thought, and he could see the direction she would take and drew even further into himself. Even his name, she would use against him—name him by it when she had something for him to do or a complaint to make against him.

“You should read them yourself, Paul, and see how you used to love me. You were such a boy then. I could almost hear you talking again. Now you never tell me how you feel. I think it was the boy I really loved. Just a minute, I’ll get one for you.”

He thought of Inge then, two years younger than himself, but pale and aloof, as though she had gone far beyond him in age and wisdom. She was slender and elegant, with her hair always pulled smooth to her neck. And when he would see her walking down the road, her back was so straight that he thought her dirndl was too tight. After she left for the Kur, he found out that tuberculosis was responsible for her strange maturity. He had no choice but to write. A girl so full of possibility that to let her drift off into death . . . no, he had held her into life, had enchanted her into believing in him, so that he had become her one real attachment.

She came back in and leaning against the counter read, in her high, trembling voice, the words that he had written to her as a boy. Inside, he felt the boy still stirring, still very much alive. In fact, it

was the boy more than the man that made it impossible for him to respond. It seemed to him that the boy was too near the surface to trust. He believed it would only confuse her to know how unbalanced he felt about himself and his life.

She stopped reading when she saw that he was not looking up, and when he did he saw that there were tears in her eyes. He remembered her at seventeen, after the year at the cure, her face at the door of her house, flushing when she saw him. Now too her color was rising. He felt in some ways she was still a girl. Even at forty there was that same vulnerability, that same attachment to him. He could only turn from it now, knowing how she was and what she needed, and that he could not give it. There was no way to turn back. Too many bills, too many other commitments related to his family absorbed his time. He felt this was something only he could see, and he wondered if other men had seen it too: that the things that are least essential to a family must somehow be taken care of first, and that in taking care of them there may be very little left for what is really important. It was not an excuse. He did not offer it. That was simply the way things were, and it would have to stand. The bills would be paid, the loan repaid, and the family fed. The boy saw it and knew that in becoming a man he had accepted it.

"Paul, you don't even hear me."

He wondered if he should try to explain again: the last two months spent driving from farm to farm, trying to sell tractors for the Amis, the salary plus commissions, the knowing that he was expected to work hard—and had. He spent his nights in sleazy little Gasthofs, drinking beer with clients. He begged her to move to Bavaria for a year so that he would be nearer, but he could not promise that he would be home during the week even then. Last night it had taken him fourteen hours to drive back. Thank God for the Citröen anyway. He sighed and put the potato pancakes on a napkin to drain.

"How about some of your applesauce, Mama?"

He grinned with one side of his mouth turned up. The familiar grin, which symbolized to her all that had vanished from their lives, made her stomach tighten. She thought that he was either mocking her or ignoring her.

"How is she, Paul, that little American secretary of yours? Is her German getting better?"

"What do you mean?"

He could tell by her face that there was more.

"The poor thing, the pretty thing. Have you been helping her with it, Paul?"

She could see in his face something move, something that was hard and distant, but she could not stop herself once she had started.

"Does she travel with you now in the Citroën, on the foam seats? Is it a cushiony ride?"

She could hear her voice shrill and high, spewing it out—all the anxiety, all the jealousy and wondering.

"Do the Americans pay her a good salary for working overtime too, Paul? Is she part of your commission?"

She went over and over it again—the car, the secretary, the damned Bavarians, the tractors, the house, the money, the children, her loneliness—battering at him with his name until finally she saw that thing inside him that was cold and hard close down and shut against her, so that she knew she had won, and lost. Out of frustration with herself for what she had done she turned to the counter and pounded with her fist down hard, again and again, screaming deep in the back of her throat, and closing her mouth so the children would not hear.

BIRGITTA BEGAN TO NOTICE when she came over that more often than not the ironing simply did not get put away, that dishes would lie in the sink for a day or two, and that Inge showed little interest in having the boys, who were old enough, do anything to help around the house. Instead she picked up their clothes and cleared their dishes. Discipline for Franck, who was fat and spoiled, completely ceased. She sensed somehow in their friendship too that Inge would do her any favor that was asked. The whole situation had had the effect on Inge, who was slender and elegant still, of creating a kind of nervous energy that was marked by lines set in her face, a slight pursing of the lips, and by hands that busily moved the household about, without ever being able to bring it into order.

Inge had told her about the succeeding weekends. Birgitta, sitting sprawled on the couch, could only guess what had really happened. She believed they simply could not talk. Their love had depended on something more subtle than that level of communication which is verbal and literal. It depended on each knowing that they were somehow, finally, important to the other, and that knowledge was demonstrated by many small actions, the full extent and meaning of which the other was probably never fully aware; much was offered and an accounting never asked. And it was only because this system had broken down, because of outside forces, that more direct communication was necessary. Both Paul and Inge had found it to be insufficient, when compared to the other. Or perhaps what they had to begin with was what was finally desired by others, what is truly meant by love; so that the skill of making an act understandable with words was impossible and even slightly meaningless.

Birgitta helped Inge pack the suitcases, helped her wash and dry the clothes. Even though Inge said she needed no help and told Birgitta it was "too good" of her, still it was clear that never would she have been able to ready the family for the trip. Her mother's house was only an hour away, but Inge was planning on staying indefinitely.

Finally, the suitcases were in the car and the house enough in order for her to go. Birgitta carried Franck to the car and strapped on his seat belt. The other children followed quietly, wondering. Inge clutched Birgitta to her shoulders and pressed her eyes into Birgitta's dark hair. If Paul had been there she never would have gone. She had threatened to do it and so she must. It was a spontaneous threat, born out of her frustration and defeat, but it was the only act she could think of that she could do on her own. Somehow, it seemed more important than anything else to her that she act.

She drove then, away from the Rhine, away from the river fog, into the gently rolling countryside. Though clouds hung over the landscape, they waited a decent distance from the earth so that the hills and fields looked endless. The green farmlands, the tiny villages of clustered houses and barns and churches, and life with its tradition and slowness still intact, became more and more familiar. The country road followed the contours of the land, rising and falling and bending off in unexpected directions. It too made no disturbance on the land.

Altbraunheim was as she had expected it to be. There was no particular relief in pulling up to her mother's home. She looked down the street to the wooden buildings and the barns with their manure piles in front; she saw a woman that she had gone to school with, a bandana around her hair, shovelling hay from a wagon into the barn. She woke the children, who had fallen asleep, and towed them up to her mother's door. And then she left them to get the luggage. She heard her mother, in a high-pitched voice, tell them to remove their shoes before taking another step. Inge shuddered. In the reflection of the car window, she saw a pale woman whose hair was dirty and disheveled, but she turned up her mouth, hardly caring. Brushing loose ends out of her face, she picked up a suitcase in each hand and went inside.

She knew Paul would have said she simply wanted to remain a girl.

Good Packing

RON IKAN

When the Japanese came in
low that Sunday morning
attending to history, my
Mother read the *Tribune*
cover to cover and Dad
worked on those model planes
I marveled at years later
during the police action in

Korea. I inherited my keen interest
in voracious reading from Mom, I believe,
and from Dad I got that life's image
of his smoke-filled den choked
with model planes on white twine
crosshatching the afternoon.

By dark that Sunday night
everyone in the neighborhood was
aware of the bombing, and I've often wondered
just how many neighbors displayed increased devotion
toward each other the next few weeks.
For years now it's been my fond hope that
old, azure-veined Mr. Huddle made love
to his nagging wife before she died

Christmas Eve. I thought perhaps
one of the three uncles I was told
I had had died and gone to Purgatory,
the way my parents behaved December 7th.
Things were strange and still, and I'm positive
it snowed the morning of the 8th.

That evening we had the Motorola
tuned in as FDR made his reply
to the dastardly attack. Dad just
looked daggers and cleared his throat.
Mom didn't move a muscle for the longest time.
. . . Tuesday at school I got my first real
vaccination and on the way home
throwing hard hurt my arm.

An American Education

ALAN NAPIER

I never knew much of anything that was happening
in my city. From photos I knew that terraces
and fountains were not parts of my culture.
The sun itself and birds seemed too delicate to survive
here for long; amid so many heroes and theatres
I once tried to surrender myself;
I am searching still back into the word filled
clutter the mice inhabit, but
the fields are grey with worry as though clouds
had settled over them like an official's blanket of diversionary
mottos:

"Relax, all will come in time." "Nothing good
ever comes of being impulsive." "Look on the *good* side."

Like all my school friends, I was regularly vaccinated.
Over the space of some few years
we were shoved up and down corridors like push brooms
led to believe that *all* history from Christ to
Anne Boleyn's beheading and on down was for our
eventual benefit in this most luxurious of treacherous worlds.
That everything was and had always been meant for the
betterment of public transformation and machine guns
that would not overheat or transform their bearers into swine.

Like everyone, as soon as I could talk I began to spread
the word
but the word changed and was always
the first thought I had as my tongue turned on the spit
of the nearest meaning.

Still I was protected from little perception and Awareness—
with surety our instructors pushed our heads into our books
as though trying to drown us in an overlapping surf of
icy white pages.

There we swam in our ignorance of swimming, light
bodies so neglected by the waters it might have been flight.

Wherever we saw sand our feet tingled.
The ashes of ocean beneath us blew our souls away.

We became absolute, pale as coral, and plankton grew on us—
crustaceans sought us out.

All of life came to us to subsist and we were helpless
to resist—I was no different
allowing a woman to have me.
Allowing a son, a daughter.

Something has happened.
I have traded everything I had for nothing;
the teachers have given me thoughts for a new world.
The new world is gone. The shore. The sand. The sun is blurred.
I have grown to be a terrifying hulk, a reef, and

all of my being goes into the sinking of vessels in search of
Atlantis.

I am at my peak.

The Cruelty Of The Desert

MICHAEL WURSTER

it's alive with small creatures
if you can see them.

the woman you are with
has been crazy for years,

and if you look up at the rocks
you'll see your own brother's face

staring down.

times we knew and remember fondly—is certainly a basic human urge, but our culture seems to me to be adopting it as a philosophy of life. Donal Henahan has located “another and possibly more powerful variety” of it: “the longing for times we wish we had known.” (Cf. those long lines of 14-year-olds that used to appear at matinee performances of *Grease* in New York, not to mention the youthful sup-

porters of our new President or Lennon's young mourners). But I'd carry it a step further. The new, virulent strain of nostalgia involves the belief that we are actually *living* (or are on the brink of living) in some past era which we believe—whether we actually know anything about it—to have been better. We are no longer content to use nostalgia as a private source of enjoyment: we want to put it in action as public policy.

This development is probably a reaction not just to hard times, but to a cultural crisis. We are experiencing adversity, but a larger number of people than ever before have begun to suspect that the fundamental assumptions of Americans about America may be obsolescent: responsible capitalism, benevolent government, the possibility of unlimited growth, American diplomatic, military, and moral leadership. But for most of these doubters, the prospect of having to accept a different view of things and of having to reshape our institutions accordingly is too frightening; it's so much easier to imagine that things are different from what they are. One of Reagan's p.r. people says he found in his polling "a strong desire to enter a period of stability, of steadiness, of consistency—coupled with economic fear." Notice the subjectivity in that diagnosis ("desire," "fear")—not a word about real factual possibilities (and considering the source, one hardly senses that a radical restructuring of society in the interests of "consistency" is being proposed). One is inclined to agree with Karl Marx that "when men are about to make revolution, they fortify themselves by acting as though they were restoring a vanished past."

The evidence is all around us. One of the new "upbeat" best-sellers is called *RESTORING the American Dream* (as if the Dream were an 18th century townhouse?). "The Politics of Resentment" is supposed to bring in a new era (or is it bring back the old one?). We are promised a "return to greatness." One would like to be relieved that Zbigniew Brzezinski—the Cold War fan who's been trying for four years to translate his 1940's suspicion of Stalinism into American foreign policy of the 70s (and who was justly charged by Cyrus Vance with practicing "a dangerous new nostalgia")—is finally leaving the White House: but leaving it to whom? To the likes of him who brought nostalgia to a new low by calling the Vietnam war "a noble cause," as if someone could yearn for those days? Reagan also promised to "protect" the family and the neighborhood in a form that has virtually disappeared: his promise is at best for resuscitation, not protection. (In pledging to blur the distinction between the political and the moral and personal Reagan runs considerable dangers. But one wonders whether he is a politician at all; he often comes off more as a moral representative of the Middle American vision of the '50s).

I can remember the Charleston craze of the early '50s. Perhaps we were nostalgic in Donal Henahan's sense: despite our parents' pro-

testations to the contrary, we all thought the “Roaring Twenties” was a time of milk and honey. But I don’t think that belief had much of an effect on the way we lived most of the time. (Maybe in those drab days—which so many would have us now believe were themselves a haven of happiness—we needed some reassurance that there was some kind of joy somewhere). Moving away from politics toward popular culture, I don’t see people today as having that kind of immunity against total immersion in a nostalgic lifestyle. I can’t really see the enthusiasm for things Western, for example, as any kind of constructive return to Values that Made America Great. The Western movie, we are told, is about to make a comeback. It is now the thing to dress up in clothes associated with a creature who practically no longer exists (the cowboy—at prices that more than total a cowboy’s annual income) and go to Western bars (most of them in large cities) where the chief entertainment is riding upon mechanized bulls. The effect is only complete if one speaks with the proper accent and in the proper *argot*. Of course the music is Country and Western, which speaks of the fundamental sorrows and joys of the earth that most of us have little experience of these days. What we have got here is a total nostalgic environment (many of whose features suggest a reaction against feminism, a desire to return to the macho male’s unquestioned dominance) which makes disco look like stark realism (as in a way it is: at least it reflects contemporary crises in the area of sexual and other values). We all need some escape from the anxieties of our lives, but this is “restoring a vanished past” that could have fatal consequences—a people totally isolated from reality.

Guy Davenport recently advanced the thesis that “All American art (music, painting, writing, the drama) has been retrospective for the past 30 years,” and he’s right. There is probably little one can do to promote new visions and techniques in serious art (except to encourage those who show signs of moving toward them). Similarly there is little one can do to stem the tide of shopgirl “romances” that flood the market. When Ricardo Montalban tells us on TV that *Silhouette Romances* will give us “romance as it used to be—and could be again,” he is appealing to those pathetic souls who are unable for whatever reason (social conditioning, IQ) to understand the changes that have taken place in sexual relations: “could be again” is outright irresponsibility (as if love ever was what these sub-literary works assert).

A far more distressing spectacle than the relative helplessness of those of us who stand and wait and the futility of those who crave pap substitutes for art is the reaction of the relatively sophisticated audience at the theatre—and of the popular critics on whom they rely for advice. The audiences at recent “nostalgia” revivals of musicals like *Oklahoma!*, *West Side Story*, and *Brigadoon* know that these pro-

ductions are not well done (they are often directed and/or performed by people who haven't the faintest idea even of the styles in which these works must be produced in order to be convincing: even the nostalgia is ersatz). But there is such a hunger for their statements. When love literally performs miracles at the end of the current, wretchedly performed production of *Brigadoon*, one can feel the audience soaring, even though the low applause level during the show indicates its low evaluation of its artistic merit. These audiences are in crisis: their emotional needs and their aesthetic responses are alarmingly out of whack with one another. These are people who presumably do not live in total isolation except to attend shows that were popular in the late 1940s. Why is there no cry for critics who will tell the truth? Why do these audiences put up with this fakery? Why has this longing for what-used-to-be been allowed to interfere with the production of new serious drama?

Last summer I witnessed something even more depressing. A well-known Midwestern repertory theatre—one of international standing, whose reputation rests on its success in exposing its audiences to the finest in drama and training it to see its value, all on a non-profit basis quite different from the Broadway cash nexus—performed a new version of *Camille* adapted from the Dumas novel from which he derived his own play. Dumas's version has an undeserved reputation for being a corny anachronism. Some of its themes—the workings of social determinism, the independence of women, erotic drives—have enduring interest, and his work does many of them justice; indeed his play is considered by historians of the drama to be one of the predecessors of Ibsen. Our understanding of these themes has changed, however, and so there is much to be said for a new version.

But did this new play stress Marguerite Gauthier as a liberated woman or as a product of an unjust society? It did not. There we all were in this Temple of Art being told that the sum and substance of this complex human being's life is that ONE CAN DIE OF A BROKEN HEART. I am not kidding. And did this audience of enlightened theatre-goers greet this simple-minded attempt to set the serious theatre—let alone our consideration of human motivation—back 150 years with laughter and derision? They did not—they ate it up (and so did some of the critics).

I do not know what can be done about this wallowing in nostalgia, other than to in a modest way promote awareness of it and its dangers. But I am convinced that we had best come to our senses lest we come to a bad end. Either the reaction against it ("when men *do* make revolution" they try to destroy the past) or the consequences of it (isolation from reality) are frightening to contemplate.

Contributors

EVE DAVIS lives in Boalsburg, Pa., where she gardens and hopes to find someone to talk about writing with. She keeps up her ties to La Salle by attending Claude Koch's writing classes and by sending us her work ("A Crystal Clear Life" is her third story in our pages). A resident of County Down, Northern Ireland, M. J. FOLEY has published poems in *The Anglo-Welsh Review*, as well as in numerous American journals. RON IKAN is a University of Iowa basketball fan: he expects his team to be in the final four at the Philadelphia Spectrum around the time his poem appears. It's always a pleasure to be first: "Driving" is MARYLEE MacDONALD's first acceptance. She describes herself as "basically a Californian" (she taught carpentry and home remodeling there), but is currently in exile: she lives in Urbana, Illinois and teaches at Parkland Junior College. JOSEPH P. MOONEY is Chairman of Economics at La Salle. He's been promising to write his Cuba piece for some time, and it was worth the wait. A recipient of the Engleman Award, ALAN NAPIER has poems appearing soon in *Poetry Northwest*, *Cedar Rock*, and elsewhere. He also has a novel in progress. VIRGINIA M. STETSER has had numerous poems published in quarterlies. She is the author of *African Palette* (Golden Quill, 1979) and the mother of five children. MICHAEL WURSTER is a caseworker for the Pennsylvania Department of Welfare in Pittsburgh. He is a founder and co-director of Pittsburgh Poetry Exchange and serves as a consultant to The Academy of Prison Arts at Western Penitentiary. His publication credits include *Ball State University Forum*, *Intrinsic*, and *Backcountry*.

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